

Editorial Department.

INSANE REFORMERS.

THE influence of local events in tincturing the psychic phenomena of the insane is a matter of frequent observation. Magnan has recently called attention to one phase of it in relation to the question of vivisection. He has had occasion to examine three or four anti-vivisectionists ; all of whom he found to be cases of paranoia (primary monomania). From his published remarks on this subject it would seem that he is inclined to believe that all anti-vivisectionists are insane. This is too extreme a view, and it is as little justifiable as would be the opinion, that because a Recorder of New York City, who (though insane) occupied that position for several years, strongly advocated the policy of hanging all homicides, sane or insane, all who advocate such procedures must be insane ; or, because an eloquent Illinois total-abstinence advocate turned out to be an escaped lunatic from the Indiana Hospital for the Insane, that therefore all total-abstinence advocates are insane. The modern passion for reforming, whether there be abuses or not, tinctures, as do all predominant popular ideas, the mental operations of the insane. The lunatic who, in the twelfth century, would have been a Peter the Hermit or, in the sixteenth, a John of Leyden, becomes, in the nineteenth, an inventor, or more frequently a reformer, who is opposed to the practice of vivisection or vaccination or the use of alcoholic beverages, the abolition of capital punishment, or to any thing capable of being changed.

The lunatic makes an undaunted, pertinacious reformer, who fails to see any thing but his delusion, and, therefore, ignores obstacles. Because of the energy arising from such delusive conceptions, he is often chosen a leader, and it is a sight not without a comical aspect, to see such a lunatic praised for foresight and philanthropy, which are often the offspring of diseased selfishness, and the leader of men intellectually his superiors, who follow him blindly, because his disease makes him energetic. It is a decidedly good sign that the populace are beginning to apply the term "crank" to impracticable projectors, because it denotes a beneficial conservatism which will do much to place the insane reformers where they can do least harm.

THE PENAL CODE AND SUICIDE.

WHEN the provisions of the New York Penal Code became known it was stated by more than one alienist that, although the Code, so far as it related to suicide, was psychologically somewhat well based, it would not be executed with sufficient rigor, as its execution was entrusted to people of rather emotional nature. The following decision shows that this opinion was correct, and that the Code will not accomplish any thing in the way of the prevention of suicide, as its execution will be a mere matter of caprice of, that most capricious of individuals, the police justice: "In the Jefferson Market police court, New York, it was decided that John Alsop, arrested for attempting suicide, should be discharged because, although he was found with his throat cut and a rope about his neck, it had not been proved that he intended to kill himself." It will be obvious that such decisions emasculate the law.

INSECURITY OF ENGLISH ALIENISTS' POSITIONS.

IT has become the fashion for English medical journalists to dilate on the insecurity of the position of medical superintendents of hospitals for insane in the United States. Every thing that has been said has certainly been warranted by the circumstances, and no American physician worthy of the name has felt justified